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Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine

Department of Psychology

PARENTAL AVAILABILITY AS A PREDICTOR OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS
AMONG STUDENTS OF A PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

By Lesley Kubisiak Logan

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Psychology

April 2019



DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the thesis presented to us by _____ on the
day of _____, 20____, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Psychology, has been examined and is
acceptable in both scholarship and literary quality.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS' SIGNATURES

_____, Chairperson

_____, Chair, Department of Psychology

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Abstract

A private residential school in the northeast United States provides a cost-free coeducation to qualifying pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade students. One of the most important application factors is need, which is measured by a scale for parental availability. For a parent to be considered unavailable, any or all of the following areas could be present: limited physical capacity to effectively parent the child, limited mental capacity to effectively parent the child, active abuse of drugs or alcohol or ongoing substance abuse history, inadequate supervision, chronic neglect, incarceration, death, no contact or sporadic contact (e.g., not on a regular basis or regular contact with months of no contact), or unknown whereabouts. It was hypothesized that lack of parental involvement or availability would lead to decreased rates of graduation of students from low-income families; therefore, children who have both or one of their parents available at the time of admission to the private residential school would be more likely to graduate on time from high school. Archival data were analyzed from a private residential school on students who were accepted and subsequently enrolled in the school between the years of 2003 and 2018 to examine the relationship between the parent availability score (PAS) and high school graduation. The results of this study indicate that there was not a significant association between parental availability and on-time high school graduation rates of students from low-income families attending a private residential school.

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

A private residential school in the northeast United States provides a cost-free coeducation to qualifying pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade students. Students live and attend school on campus. Students live in homes based on grade and gender, and most homes have between eight and 12 students residing in them. All homes have married couples who also live in the home. In addition to housing and schooling, students are provided medical and dental care, access to award-winning programs, year-round programming, academic tours, language immersion trips, global summits, opportunities to accrue scholarships for college, and support after high school graduation, all at no charge to students and their families. This school dedicates its resources to children in financial need, as they believe that all children deserve the very best education regardless of their financial circumstances and that a family's income should not determine a child's outcome.

Mitra and Brucker (2017) noted that within the U.S., poverty is measured primarily through the deficiency of material or financial deprivations. They also stated that in the U.S., poverty is generally calculated using the official poverty measure (OPM) by the U.S. government. The OPM relies solely on a family's income and is based on a set of pretax income thresholds, which do not include either capital gains or in-kind benefits. Thresholds vary by family size and composition. In 2012, 46.5 million people were living in poverty, according to the OPM (Mitra & Brucker, 2017).

Conger et al. (2002) suggested that those living in poverty are more likely to experience fewer desirable outcomes in life. Poverty is highly predictive of psychological maladjustment for parents and their children. Additionally, Conger et al.

indicated that there are several outcomes of poverty that can lead to the psychological distress and stress of parents, such as limited physical and/or mental capacity to effectively parent the child, active abuse of drugs or alcohol or an ongoing substance abuse history, chronic neglect or child abuse, and/or incarceration. The family stress model (FSM) indicates that the stress associated with poverty leads to psychological distress, poor relationships with parents, and subsequent child problems (Neppl, Senia, & Donnellan, 2016). The FSM suggests a series of mediated relationships between hardship conditions, economic pressure, the emotional state of caregivers, conflicts between caregivers, parenting practices, and child adjustment. These pressures are thought to place parents at increased risk for emotional distress, such as depression, anxiety, and anger (Conger et al., 2002).

Conger et al. (2002) stated that caregivers' depressed moods, which result from the stressors endured by families due to living in poverty, also decreases the level of parental nurturing both directly and indirectly toward their children. This decrease in parental nurturing subsequently diminishes parental warmth and involvement. These disruptions in the relationships between parents also lead to harsh and inconsistent parenting, a key proximal influence on the social and emotional well-being of children. More depressed parents may be less likely to engage actively in activities that promote children's investment, such as helping with homework, participating in a rich conversation, or engaging children in reading (Yeung, Linver, & Brooks-Gunn, 2002).

A number of studies have shown that parental involvement, warmth, support, and low hostility have a positive impact on children's adjustment, either by promoting academic, personal, or social competence or by reducing risk for emotional or behavioral

problems (Neppi et al., 2016). According to Hoglund, Jones, Brown, and Aber (2015), parent involvement in schooling is a multidimensional construct that refers to the engagement of significant caregivers in the education of their children at home, such as by helping their children with homework, as well as at school, such as by communicating with their children's teachers and supporting their children in school. Among low-income families, variation in economic hardship may directly affect levels of parent involvement and child adjustment. Parental financial stress also has been associated with school-related characteristics and trajectories in youth, as poverty hinders school readiness (Raffaele & Knoff, 1999). Further, Hoglund et al. reported that in addition to completing fewer years of schooling, impoverished youth have fewer academic skills upon school entry, which are critical for later achievement. In addition, the authors stated that parent involvement may mediate the effect of economic hardship on children's prospective academic and social-emotional adjustment.

Parents' school-related involvement in home and school settings is also expected to contribute positively to children's prospective adjustment, as parents are thought to be generally motivated to engage in activities that have the potential to enhance their children's adjustment (Hoglund, Jones, Brown, & Aber, 2015). According to this perspective, by engaging in school-related activities at home and school, parents are believed to socialize children to value learning and to develop the self-regulation skills necessary to participate successfully in school. When parents are engaged in their children's schooling at home, they are also modeling a positive valuing of school that may motivate children to become more engaged and excited about school, which nurtures children's academic success. Additionally, when parents are positively involved in the

school setting, they can proactively monitor children's school-related adjustment, demonstrate their connection to the school system, and provide a source of support for their children at school.

The relationship between parental involvement and school success is an important consideration, as evidence suggests that educational attainment plays a key role in determining social and economic well-being in adulthood (De Civita, Pagani, Vitaro, & Tremblay, 2004). Nevertheless, these researchers stated that an alarming number of youngsters leave school each year without successfully completing high school programs. One important determinant of high school dropout is the experience of grade retention during elementary school. Longitudinal studies using different developmental data sets have shown that children exposed to persistent poverty during middle childhood and early adolescence are at greater risk of being behind in grade for age (De Civita et al., 2004). Income source within the context of persistent poverty may affect children's academic development by dampening parents' educational aspirations for their children. For example, De Civita et al. (2004) reported that parents living with financial stress tend to be more pessimistic about their lives and the economic futures of their children, tend to feel less confident that they will have the material resources to support their children through school, and experience greater difficulties in actually helping their children with homework as they advance in grade. Therefore, parents may adapt their aspirations for their children's educational futures in terms of what is realistically possible given their limited resources, making lower educational degrees desirable and acceptable.

Ross (2016) proposed that to improve students' chances of success, parents can supplement their high expectations with actively assisting their children in planning for

college. To the extent that parents are unfamiliar with the college planning process, schools should provide this information and other skills to enhance the “college knowledge” of both parents and students. Other recommendations that Ross suggested include augmenting the instruction and extracurricular activities that youth receive at school by enrolling them in afterschool tutorials, study groups, community sports programs, and other school-adjacent activities. Notably, given that high-income parents likely have better access to these kinds of services than low-income parents, federal and locally-funded programs may be needed to offset costs, as well as to provide transportation and other resources for high-needs children. This is another area in which schools have a duty to coach and train parents about effectively engaging in their children’s education.

Statement of the Problem

Lack of parental availability in children’s lives and, consequently, less involvement in their education leads to decreased rates of graduation for students from low-income families. This lack of parental availability and involvement is due to the increased number of stressors that parents face as a result of living in poverty. These stressors include limited physical and/or mental capacity to effectively parent the child, active abuse of drugs or alcohol or ongoing substance abuse history, inadequate supervision, chronic neglect, and/or incarceration.

Purpose of the Study

Parental involvement in education is an important factor in student achievement. When parents become involved in the education of their children, a dramatic increase in student grades, test scores, and overall academic outcomes has been reported (Gould,

2011). Guiding students toward high school completion and college enrollment are major goals of the U.S. education system. Student risk factors that lead to the decision to drop out of school include living in a single-parent household, being economically disadvantaged, experiencing grade retention, limited English proficiency, emotional and/or behavioral disorders, and learning disabilities, to name a few (Ross, 2016).

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine the impact of parental availability on students from low-income families and their high school graduation rates. Additionally, information from this study will be used to refine the admissions process at the private residential school from which data were collected. This information will be useful when engaging with the students' families at time of admission and throughout their enrollment.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1. It was hypothesized that students from low-income families who have both of their biological/adoptive parents available at time of admission would be more likely to graduate on time from high school than students from low-income families who have one adoptive/biological parent available at time of admission.

Hypothesis 2. It was hypothesized that students from low-income families who have both of their biological/adoptive parents available at time of admission would be more likely to graduate on time from high school than students from low-income families who live with one or both biological/adoptive parents, but they are unavailable.

Hypothesis 3. It was hypothesized that students from low-income families who have both of their biological/adoptive parents available at time of admission would be

more likely to graduate on time from high school than students from low-income families who live with someone other than a biological/adoptive parent at time of admission.

Hypothesis 4. It was hypothesized that students from low-income families who live with someone other than a biological/adoptive parent at time of admission would be more likely to graduate on time from high school students from low-income families who live with one or both biological/adoptive parents, but they are unavailable.

Hypothesis 5. It was hypothesized that students from low-income families who have one adoptive/biological parent available at time of admission would be more likely to graduate on time from high school than students from low-income families who live with one or both biological/adoptive parents, but they are unavailable.

Additional analyses. Fisher, Frazer, and Murray (1984) studied the transition from home to boarding school of a group of children aged 13 to 16 years. Their findings did not identify any relationship between age of transition and overall adjustment. Therefore, grade at time of enrollment and on-time graduation were exploratory and no hypothesis was proposed.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

What is Poverty?

Within the U.S., poverty is measured primarily through calculation of material or financial deprivations and computed in one of two ways. The most commonly used measure used by the U.S. government is the official poverty measure (OPM; Mitra & Brucker, 2017). The OPM relies solely on a family's income and is based on a set of pretax income thresholds, which do not include either capital gains or in-kind benefits. Thresholds vary by family size and composition. In 2012, 46.5 million people were living in poverty, according to the OPM (Mitra & Brucker, 2017). The supplemental poverty measure (SPM) has been developed by the U.S. government within the past two decades to improve how poverty is measured. The SPM threshold is adjusted to the needs of different family types and to geographic differences in housing costs using an equivalence scale. According to the SPM, in 2012 almost 50 million Americans were impoverished (Mitra & Brucker, 2017).

Girod and Shapiro (2012) stated that the wealth gap today between younger and older Americans is the largest on record; the median net worth of households headed by someone 65 or older is \$170,494, whereas the median net worth for younger-age households is \$3,662. Older generations had many things working in their favor, such as a strong economy and a long rise in housing prices, which the younger generation does not have currently. Rather, high school graduates now find themselves competing with college graduates for basic jobs in service businesses (Girod & Shapiro, 2012).

Beliefs about poverty and inequality over the past 40 years have been described by some as stratification beliefs (Homan, Valentino, & Weed, 2017). Stratification beliefs consider the effects of culture and subculture, technology, occupational conditions, class, and economic position on general beliefs about a given society. Much of the stratification beliefs research has focused on individuals' explanations for why people are poor, which are known as causal attributions for poverty. Joe Feagin began investigating causal attributions of poverty in 1975 using surveys. Feagin administered a survey that listed several possible reasons for poverty, or causal attributions, and asked respondents to rate the importance of each. These explanations were then categorized into three main attributions for poverty: individualist, structuralist, and fatalist. The individualist attribution assumes that the cause of poverty is in the personal traits and behaviors of the poor; the structuralist attribution believes that the cause of poverty is due to the features of society; and the fatalist attribution locates the cause of poverty to fate, bad luck, or God's will. Americans are typically more likely to endorse the individualist attribution of poverty, as opposed to the structuralist or fatalist attributions (Homan et al., 2017).

In addition to studying why people are impoverished, there are also several types of poverty, including but not limited to rural, urban, intergenerational, and downward-mobility. For each type of poverty, one may associate a different attribution. Homan and colleagues (2017) called beliefs about poverty cultural schemas. Schemas are cognitive networks used to categorize and link concepts through learning and experience. Cultural schemas are cognitive schemas that are shared across individuals. These researchers

suggested that cultural schemas about poverty contain beliefs about the kind of people who are poor and beliefs about the reasons they are poor.

When interviewees were asked to consider their beliefs about poverty in the U.S., there was a strong distinction between those who are born poor and those who become poor during their lifetimes (Homan et al., 2017). Many interviewees believed they could not make a causal attribution to the poor without knowing how a person had become impoverished. These researchers proposed two distinct schemas of poverty: intergenerational poverty and downward mobility. Their study found that people are more likely to attribute intergenerational poverty to structuralist causes and interpersonal, interactive, and contextual features of poverty (i.e., family, peers, role models, gangs, and children). In contrast, people were more likely to attribute downwardly mobility poverty to individualist causes.

Musick and Mare (2006) stated that intergenerational poverty, or the intergenerational transmission of poverty, is the private and public transfer of deficits in assets and resources from one generation to another. Sociologists have tended to focus on occupation-based measures of socioeconomic status (SES) and economists have focused largely on the intergenerational inheritance of labor income. In addition to deficits, Musick and Mare also suggested that parents affect children through endowments and investments. Endowments include genetic characteristics or cultural or social capital. Genetic characteristics could include ability, personality, and physical traits, whereas cultural or social capital contains tastes, values, family connections, and other social ties. Investments are the money parents spend on their children's health,

care, education, and neighborhoods, as well as the time and effort parents spend on supervision, support, and expectations.

Social science and recent social trends link socioeconomic well-being and the organization of families. Musik and Mare (2006) found that, in the U.S., family structure has become an important stratifying variable, as over one quarter of all children now live with single parents. These researchers stated that single-parent families have higher poverty rates than two-parent families and are more than twice as likely to experience longer spells of poverty. Additionally, poor economic prospects reduce the chances of marriage and increase the chances of divorce. Similarly, having a child out of wedlock and divorce are also important contributors of poverty. Children who grow up poor or spend time in single-parent families are more likely to experience poverty and single parenthood as adults. Further, Rodgers (1995) found that children of poor parents are 16% to 28% more likely to be poor as adults.

Downward mobility has been described as a critical form of closure, meaning it is difficult for lower socioeconomic groups to access white-collar jobs (Wilson, 2009). The broader and more generalized route to downward mobility states that stratification-based advantages traditionally accrued with a privileged background status, the accumulation of significant human capital, and a desired location in the differentiated U.S. labor market. Additionally, the earlier timing of downward movement signals a form of disadvantage; the longer the spell spent in non-white-collar employment means people, especially minorities, lose a greater amount of socioeconomic rewards, both material and symbolic (Wilson, 2009).

Poverty and Disability

Elwan (1999) found that disability is significantly related to poverty in the U.S. The Social Security Administration (SSA) defines disability as having a medical condition that (a) prevents the individual from doing his or her work, (b) prevents him or her from adjusting to other work, and (c) is expected to last for at least one year or result in death. It is often noted that disabled people are poorer than the general population and that people living in poverty are more likely than others to be disabled. “Diseases of poverty” are described as untreated impairments that start or accelerate as a family’s economic status diminishes, and the degree to which social and economic deprivation cause impairment and incapacity (Elwan, 1999).

Poor families often do not have land to grow food, do not have an adequate income to purchase basic needs, have inadequate sanitation, and have limited access to health care (Elwan, 1999). Malnutrition is a cause of disability, as well as a contributory factor that increases susceptibility to other disabling diseases. Lack of adequate and timely health care can exacerbate disease outcomes and can turn impairments into chronic disabilities. Without resources for medical or social services, remedial impairments can become permanent disabilities. Those who are living in poverty also tend to more often work in demanding or risky physical labor environments, thereby increasing risk of impairment (Elwan, 1999).

Furthermore, when someone becomes disabled, the following factors can increase the likelihood that he or she will enter poverty: loss of income, additional costs resulting from the disability, and marginalization or exclusion from services and/or social and community activities (Elwan, 1999). The extra costs related directly to the disability

include but are not limited to medical expenses, equipment (e.g., crutches, wheelchairs, and other medical devices), adaptations to housing, and specialized services. Within the U.S., total per capita medical expenditures alone are over four times greater for people with activity limitations than for people with no limitations. Surveys of four countries in 1995 found that between 12% and 60% of landmine victims had to sell assets to meet their medical bills, and 61% of Cambodian landmine victims were forced into debt to pay for medical care (Elwan, 1999).

The costs of providing care to a disabled person may be remunerated by the disabled person directly, may be met by state or local authorities as part of the welfare system, or may fall on friends or relatives providing care. Findings in the U.S. indicated that families play a significant role in preventing poverty among the elderly through shared living arrangements (Elwan, 1999). In any society where there is little support from outside the household, the additional resources (including time) needed influence the household's well-being. In an impoverished household, the effect can be devastating when the disabled person is also responsible for all or part of the household's income or subsistence (Elwan, 1999).

Individuals who are disabled are also often the victims of negative social attitudes and are subject to stigmatization and neglect (Elwan, 1999). Due to this stigmatization and neglect, the disabling condition can be exacerbated, or the onset of new disabling condition may occur. Exclusion and marginalization reduce opportunities for disabled people to contribute productively to the household and the community, and increase the risk of falling into poverty (Elwan, 1999).

Whittle and colleagues (2017) defined stigma as the convergent process of labeling, stereotyping, separating, and discriminating against individuals possessing a particular attribute by those who do not have this attribute and who hold social, political, and/or economic power. Stigma can take multiple forms, such as acts of hostility or discrimination experienced by individuals possessing a stigmatized attribute; anticipatory fear of being subjected to enacted stigma; internalization; or societal-level conditions, cultural norms, and institutional policies that constrain the opportunities, resources, and well-being of those who are being stigmatized. As a stigmatized group, individuals with physical disabilities are frequently restricted from opportunities and resources within the dominant culture, such as full economic, political, and biological citizenship (Whittle et al., 2017). Those with disabilities are not only stigmatized for having to cope long-term with disabling chronic illnesses that isolate them from healthier individuals, but also for their attempts to seek financial stability in their conditions by applying for government disability benefits. This latter stigma was rooted in the perception, sometimes internalized, that others viewed them as lazy or immoral for “living off the state” (Whittle et al., 2017).

People with disabilities are often devalued, as they are seen as possessing little human capital. First, destitution, homelessness, stigma, mental illness, and poor chronic disease management have strong negative health consequences for individuals with disabilities. Second, health and social complications are likely to entangle the affected individuals in bureaucratic complexities at additional cost to the public social safety net via Medicaid, Ryan White, SNAP, public housing assistance, legal aid, and other social

programs. Stigmatized individuals must defend their claims to legitimate social status (Whittle et al., 2017).

In addition to stigmatization, Saetermoe, Scattone, and Kim (2001) found that those without disabilities tend to subtly distance themselves from those with disabilities. Those without disabilities are often uncomfortable interacting with a person who has a physical disability, particularly if the disability is visibly obvious. Those who were non-disabled tended to maintain a superficial and distant demeanor, as well as greater personal space between themselves and those with physical disabilities (Saetermoe, Scattone, & Kim, 2001). Behaviors of the non-disabled individuals can lead those with disabilities to feel socially isolated; individuals with disabilities may start to view their disabilities as intrusive in social situations.

Poverty and Addiction

Zemore and colleagues (2016) found that addiction often intersects with poverty due to the various stressors that living in poverty entails. Poverty has been described as a psychosocial stressor that can induce substance use as a means to cope. Further, poor neighborhoods connote higher risk for heavy drinking and alcohol disorders (Zemore et al., 2016). Connected with this, substance use practices common in poor neighborhoods, such as public drinking, may attract special notice. Indeed, residence in low-income neighborhoods increases distress (and, thus, stress-related drinking and problem behaviors) and surveillance by authorities, such as the police (Zemore et al., 2016). Moreover, negative consequences (e.g., problems with family or friends) are often worsened due to substance use, which may amplify the social disapproval associated with drinking.

Two hypotheses exist regarding the relationship between social stressors and drug-related behaviors (Boardman, Finch, Ellison, Williams, & Jackson, 2001). The stress reduction hypothesis suggests that drug use could occur to relieve the varied states of stress; this stress-related drug use subsequently contributes to abuse and dependency. Therefore, drug use is considered to be a coping mechanism in response to a number of stressful life experiences. Another hypothesis that could explain the connection between social stressors and drug use is the general strain theory. This theory states that delinquency and drug use are positively related to high levels of social strain. Social strain occurs when others threaten or prevent one from achieving positively valued goals, remove or threaten positively valued things that one possesses, or present or threaten one with negatively valued things. Strain is then associated with various negative emotional states that then lead one to engage in delinquent behaviors to alleviate the strain (Boardman et al., 2001).

Many studies have examined the contribution of neighborhoods to patterns of substance use. Research has shown that key stressful life events (e.g., death of a loved one, job turnover, criminal victimization) occur more frequently in highly impoverished urban neighborhoods (Boardman et al., 2001). Theories of social exclusion and relative deprivation suggest that areas with low SES suffer from differential development of social structures that help sanction social behavior and maintain social order and physical resources, such as housing and employment opportunities (Karriker-Jaffe, 2011). This researcher suggested that sustained employment provides one with necessary spatial and temporal anchors; without the ritualized behaviors of employment, one's sense of control over one's own activities diminishes, leading to lower levels of self-efficacy.

In addition, disadvantaged neighborhoods may provide a normative context in which substance use is not sanctioned as strongly as it is within affluent neighborhoods (Boardman et al., 2001). Unfortunately, Boardman and colleagues (2001) explained that by living in a disadvantaged neighborhood, one is more likely to be exposed to norms and values that tolerate deviant conduct and have limited access to positive social role models and/or social networks that mainstream avenues of appropriate socioeconomic attainment. Additionally, residents of disadvantaged neighborhoods may lack the social and material resources that are necessary to sanction non-normative substance use. High poverty neighborhoods have lower levels of community organization and collective efficacy (i.e. social clubs, block associations), which leads to higher levels of collective stress (Boardman et al., 2001). Regrettably, access to adequate substance abuse counseling and treatment facilities is also limited in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Finally, residing in disadvantaged neighborhoods may increase drug use simply because drugs are more readily available in these neighborhoods. When living in a disadvantaged neighborhood, one is more likely to be exposed to drugs, drugs dealers, and drug users. Social contact among neighbors may be one of the primary mechanisms through which drug use operates (Boardman et al., 2001).

Poverty and Crime/Incarceration

According to Kang (2016), inequality and crime have long been linked to one another. An individual's SES is thought to be a key determinant of poverty and criminal justice system involvement. Based on the rational model of criminal behavior, an individual will choose to commit a crime if his or her potential criminal gains, in consideration of the costs of punishment, are greater than his or her potential gains from

legitimate work (Kang, 2016). Those who are near the bottom of the income distribution may be left with modest increase in legitimate earnings potential but much larger increases in potential criminal gains, because there are wealthier potential victims who possess goods worth taking. This additional incentive to offend may result in higher levels of crime. Additionally, poverty-concentrated neighborhoods are heavily populated by individuals with high risks of both offending and victimization (Kang, 2016). In his study, Kang found that crime victimization was disproportionately concentrated among the poor, who, one might think, would provide fewer criminal gains to offenders. He found that low-income households were much more likely to be victimized than higher income households for both violent and property crimes. Households with income level less than \$7,500 were more than four times as likely as households with income level of \$75,000 or more to be victims of an aggravated assault. Even for burglary, a financially motivated crime, the ratio of the victimization rates between the lowest and highest income groups was approximately 350%. One may choose to victimize the poor because there may be less risk of imprisonment and punishment; low-income households are much more likely to become victims of crime and less likely to report to authorities after being victimized. Therefore, in the language of the supply and demand, the poor supply more criminal opportunities to potential offenders who find them preferable crime targets and demand more criminal opportunities because of their low legitimate earnings potential (Kang, 2016).

Nkansah-Amankra, Agbanu, and Miller (2013) found that the poor are thought to be more likely to have disparate criminal justice outcomes, including arrests, sentencing, and incarceration. The criminal justice system has become more penal, with longer

sentences imposed on minor drug offenders and on repeat felony offenders for minor offenses. In contrast, the criminal justice system is considerably less punitive when it comes to corporate crimes. Some believe this era of mass incarceration is targeted toward the underclass, minority men left vulnerable by deindustrialization, social policy retrenchment, and the ascendance of prison as a social container for these largely unskilled laborers. Incarceration is thought to be connected directly with the coercive powers of the state to maintain social order or social control for the interests of the advantaged majority. In just under three decades, the prison system went from fewer than 250,000 inmates to more than 2.5 million; this expansion occurred alongside an increase in the number of people in poverty in the U.S. (Nkansah-Amankra, Agbanu, & Miller, 2013).

Covin (2012) reiterated that there is a correlation between poverty, homelessness, and incarceration, and pointed out that it is evident that the poor do not commit more crimes than the wealthy. Between crimes that are committed characteristically by poor people (i.e., street crimes) and those committed characteristically by the well-off (i.e., white-collar and corporate crimes), the system treats the former much more harshly than the latter, even when the crimes of the well-off take more money from the public or cause more death and injury than the crimes of the poor. The resulting effect of this debilitating correlation is the criminalization of entire communities representing the poor, homeless, urban or inner-city, undereducated, mentally ill, and addicted, and the branding of such citizens (Covin, 2012).

Covin (2012) also found that one of the most significant challenges to the homeless population upon release from jail and/or prison is finding employment.

Potential employers are often hesitant to employ individuals with criminal records. Incarceration considerably reduces ex-offenders' likelihoods of future employment; negatively impacts their mental health outcomes and those of the individuals most intimately connected to them, including their partners and children; and typically results in poor health outcomes compared with non-incarcerated individuals from similar social locations (Nkansah-Amankra et al., 2013). The conceptual appeal is to "lock up" habitual offenders for extended periods, so that they are less likely to be involved in criminal behaviors. As ex-offenders, these individuals have little or no chance of staying out of trouble and, in many instances, end up returning jail for parole violations (Covin, 2012).

Criminogenic lifestyles and behaviors are also more likely to manifest in unstable families such as homeless families (Covin, 2012). In many at-risk communities, the prospect of homelessness is an ever-present threat. The institution of the jail and/or prison is the primary facilitator of this reality. There are communities, especially in urban areas, that have been decimated by the removal of either one or both parents from the home because of being incarcerated. As a result, individuals are faced with the daunting prospect of beginning life anew as homeless individuals following their releases from prison (Covin, 2012).

Furthermore, incarceration has been shown to strain parenting and long-term partnerships (Covin, 2012). Thus, the considerable expansion of incarceration, along with the widening of poverty and public health disparities in the U.S., transmits disadvantage across generations. Covin (2012) observed that correctional facilities began housing inmates who were often related to one another and, at times, from the same

immediate families. It was not uncommon to have a mother housed in the Women's Detention Center, a son in the Juvenile Detention Center of the facility, and a father in the Men's Detention Center. The cycle of incarceration was being perpetuated from one generation to another. The criminogenic psychosis of the family was being internalized and re-taught either subconsciously or intentionally. In certain communities, children learn that the jail and prison are places to be visited on a weekly basis much in the same manner some children grow up with the synagogue, mosque, or parish being part of their cultures (Covin, 2012).

Poverty and Neglect

Nearly one quarter of adults (22.6%) worldwide have suffered physical abuse as children, 36.3% emotional abuse, 16.3% physical neglect, and 11.8% sexual abuse (Jonson-Reid, Drake, & Zhou, 2012). Poverty is one of the most important predictors of child maltreatment, especially neglect. Children who are reported for neglect often come from households with poverty histories (Jonson-Reid et al., 2012). Although the individual poverty of a child's family has been recognized as a risk factor for abuse and for hospitalization from abuse, local studies have noted increased rates of child abuse in impoverished communities (Farrell et al., 2017). Theories to explain the relationship between community poverty and child abuse cite lack of community resources, environmental stressors, differential reporting thresholds, and presence of factors related to economic success. The greatest difference in fatality rates was seen when comparing areas of low poverty concentration to areas of greater than 10% poverty concentration. This suggests that, for fatal child abuse, there are implications for child health and safety even in the middle poverty categories, under which most children in the U.S. fall. More

geographically limited studies substantiate this poverty picture (Farrell et al., 2017).

Pelton (1978) conducted the classic study of child abuse and neglect in the early 1960s. Case records of 300 families taken from the active files of child protection agencies in several urban, suburban, and rural areas of the country were examined and revealed that most families studied were poor. Furthermore, few of the families lived in adequate housing, as the homes were poorly heated, vermin-ridden, in various states of disrepair, and had overall hazards to health (Pelton, 1978).

Pelton (1978) also stated that poor people are more available to public scrutiny and are more likely to be known to social agencies and law enforcement agencies, as workers have had more of an opportunity to enter their households. Conversely, families living in middle and upper classes are less open to inspection by public officials, and less likely to turn to public agencies when help is needed. Although poor people are more susceptible to public scrutiny, there is substantial evidence that the relationship between poverty and child abuse and neglect is not just an anomaly of reporting systems. It has been found that the highest incidence of child neglect has occurred in families living in the most extreme poverty. Furthermore, the public scrutiny argument cannot explain why the most severe injuries have occurred within the poorest families (Pelton, 1978).

There are several stressors related to poverty (Collins et al., 2011). These stressors create frustration levels for parents that can result in fatal maltreatment of their children. Families living in urban poverty, enduring chronic and complex traumatic stress, and having difficulty meeting their children's basic needs have significant child maltreatment risk factors. Increased exposure to stressful life events and chronic traumas, such as multigenerational family, school, and community violence,

victimization, and traumatic loss, often leads to the development and escalation of trauma symptoms among parents and children, challenges in parenting, and heightened risk for child maltreatment (Collins et al., 2011). Pelton (1978) found that under these circumstances, even minor misbehaviors and annoyances presented by powerless children may trigger abuse. Such poverty related factors as unemployment, dilapidated and overcrowded housing, and insufficient money, food, recreation, or hope can provide the stressful context for abuse.

These factors, according to Pelton (2015), include variances in the material hardships themselves that poverty produces, as well as in the personal factors of parents. Moreover, the stressors of poverty environments, if not reduced through material supports, can cause dysfunctional modes of coping, such as alcohol and drug abuse, which can destroy parental competence. Thus, the probability of child abuse and neglect may be indirectly related to material hardship, through the stresses on parents that such hardship may generate. Job loss is more strongly related to child abuse and neglect among families that are already poor and do not have the financial resources to cushion the additional blow of job loss (and, therefore, loss of income) to their material circumstances. Reports have shown that the incidence rate of maltreatment was higher for children with an unemployed parent than for children with employed parents (Pelton, 2015).

Poverty has also been stated to be a predominant context in which harm and endangerment to children thrive (Pelton, 2015). First, Pelton (2015) reported that poverty produces material hardships that can lead to parental stress. This stress, apart from other possibilities mentioned previously, can cause anger in parents that might end in child

abuse or depression that might result in neglect. Second, the material deficits of poverty, such as the health and safety hazards of inadequate housing, can directly lead to child harm and endangerment, with the parents being implicated for child neglect for not sufficiently protecting the child from those hazards. Because the diligence of care necessary to protect a child in a dangerous environment is greater than in a safer environment, poor parents are more susceptible to a judgment of neglect. The material deficits of poverty can indirectly lead to child abuse and neglect through parental stress, and directly by merely presenting situations that are harmful to children, with the parents' failures or inability to protect the child being called neglect. When people's environments and living conditions are made less dangerous, the quality of care that parents with the least ability to cope with poverty are capable of giving, will be less inadequate. The parents will be less susceptible to judgments of neglect and less likely to resort to abuse in desperate attempts to keep their children away from the hazards of their environments (Pelton, 2015).

Pelton (1978) believed that child neglect is a far more pervasive social problem than abuse, occurring in more than twice as many cases. Moreover, when harm to the child is severe enough to have required hospitalization or medical attention, it is almost two times as likely to have been due to neglect than to abuse. In leading to neglect, these stressors may produce the mediating factor of despair rather than anger. The relationship can be seen most clearly in those cases in which a terrible incident, such as a fire devastating the home, also destroys a parent's capacity to cope with poverty. Nevertheless, no matter the origins of neglectful behavior, there is a more immediate way in which poverty causes harm to neglected children: Poverty itself directly presents

dangers for children, and very often neglect merely increases the likelihood that those dangers will result in harm.

Pelton (1978) further reported that neglectful irresponsibility more readily leads to dire consequences when it occurs in the context of poverty than when that same behavior is engaged in by middle class parents. In middle class families, there is some leeway for irresponsibility, a luxury that poverty does not afford. A middle class parent's inadequate supervision will not put a child in as great danger as that of the impoverished parent because the middle class home is not as drastically beset with health and safety hazards. The context of poverty multiplies the hazards of a parent's neglect. Thus, poor people have very little margin for irresponsibility or mismanagement of either time or money. For example, in some cases, a mother does not have much choice but to leave her children alone. A mother on welfare with many children cannot easily obtain or pay for a babysitter every time she must leave the house to do her chores. Thus, some mothers are caught up in difficult and dangerous situations that have less to do with their adequacy and responsibility as parents than with the difficult circumstances of their lives (Pelton, 1978).

Notably, injuries due to neglect (which accounts for a far greater percentage of child abuse and neglect incidents than abuse) are largely unintentional (Pelton, 2015). They can be viewed as a subset of a far larger realm of unintentional injuries, or accidents. Similar to child abuse and neglect, there is much evidence that heightened risk of severe accidental injury to children is strongly related to low SES. Moreover, there has always been an inclination within the child welfare system to call lack of resources, such as adequate housing, child neglect; that is, to confuse poverty itself with neglect. If

people truly intend to improve child safety and protection, they should be concerned about protecting children from harm, no matter the presumed sources (Pelton, 2015).

Recognition of the impoverished context of child neglect confirms the need for concrete services directed at the dangers of poverty, such as house-finding; rat control; in-home babysitting services; installation of window guardrails; and emergency cash for the repair of boilers or plumbing, the payment of gas and electric bills, a security deposit on a new apartment, or the purchase of food, cribs, playpens, and other necessities (Pelton, 1978). In addition, reducing the immediate stresses of poverty may have a rapid and positive impact upon the parents' behaviors. These parents' behavior problems are less likely to be symptoms of unconscious or interpersonal conflicts than of concrete antecedent environmental conditions, crises, and catastrophes (Pelton, 1978).

Poverty and Mental Illness

Low-income individuals experience higher rates of mental health problems than individuals in higher earnings brackets (Palomar-Lever & Victorio-Estrada, 2012). Living in extreme poverty conditions implies suffering a scarcity of economic resources as well as having less access to satisfiers, problems that are further exacerbated by exposure to inadequate housing conditions (e.g., overcrowding and lack of hygiene) and living in neighborhoods with higher crime rates. Therefore, this additional burden of difficulties means that living in extreme poverty conditions is associated with greater stress. Research on stressful experiences indicates that individuals in low social classes are exposed to a greater number of stressful experiences; however, it has also been observed that individuals in low social classes are more likely to exhibit symptoms of suffering than those in higher economic positions (Palomar-Lever & Victorio-Estrada,

2012). This suggests that individuals in low social classes are more sensitive to stress than individuals in higher social classes due to higher doses of stressful experiences they have encountered during their lifetimes.

Those living in poverty also are at a disadvantage because they have comparatively limited access to social relationships that could provide them with support and stability with their communities (Palomar-Lever and Victorio-Estrada, 2012). The psychosocial stress implied by living in poverty may increase the risk of illness through chronic exposure to the physiological changes of the stress reaction. Stress is defined as the perception that external situational demands surpass one's personal resources to deal with them, resulting in the physiological response of stress through the fight-or-flight reaction, anxiety, rage and/or depression (Palomar-Lever & Victorio-Estrada, 2012). Stressors could be episodic (i.e., have a specific beginning and end) or chronic (i.e., prolonged or indefinite, such as with economic difficulties, unsatisfactory labor conditions, or conflictive intimate relationships). Both episodic and chronic stress conditions have been found to increase the risk of developing depression (Palomar-Lever & Victorio-Estrada, 2012).

Mood disorders generally, and major depressive disorder specifically, have been found to have a strong inverse relationship to SES (Simmons, Braun, Charnigo, Havens, & Wright, 2008). Relative position in the socioeconomic structure of society is reflected in one's self-esteem, a correlate of dysphoria, a fundamental symptom of depressive disorder. Those who live in low socioeconomic positions tend to blame themselves for their status and feel guilt, which is another component of major depressive disorder. Life in the lower level of SES is more stressful, and stress also has been connected to major

depressive disorder. National epidemiologic data demonstrate that individuals living at or near the federal poverty threshold are significantly more likely to have a diagnosis of major depressive disorder compared to those earning at least three times the poverty level (Eaton, Muntaner, Bovasso, & Smith, 2001). Additionally, poor mental health is also a significant obstacle to employment and economic independence among low-income residents (Simmons et al., 2008).

Palomar-Lever and Victorio-Estrada (2012) proposed that anxiety and depression symptoms may be highly incapacitating for those who suffer from them and imply an economic burden in terms of missed workdays and treatment, with an impact on the well-being of those around them. The suffering of more than one anxiety disorder significantly increases the probable deterioration in an individual's social, labor and daily functioning. Anxiety may consist of excessive, constant, and hard-to-control anguish and worry, characterized by symptoms of restlessness, fatigue, irritability, tension, difficulty concentrating, and alteration of sleep patterns (Palomar-Lever & Victorio-Estrada, 2012). There is a significant overlap between depression and anxiety symptoms, and comorbidity between anxiety and depression is high. The high incidence of symptoms associated with anxiety in patients with depression generally increases in relation to the severity of the depression, suggesting that anxiety is an essential trait of depression. Subsequently, the prolonged experience of living with elevated levels of anxiety may lead to depression, and the experience of depression may give way to chronic or severe anxiety regarding one's problems or future (Palomar-Lever & Victorio-Estrada, 2012). Simmons et al. (2008) discussed two competing theories that dominate the research about the relationship between mental health disorders and low SES: the social selection theory

and the social causation theory. The social selection theory suggests mental illness is an inherent trait that negatively affects one's ability to maintain a job and/or successfully meet employment obligations, resulting in downward mobility, unemployment, and subsequent poverty. In contrast, the social causation theory suggests that the conditions associated with growing up and living in poverty, including frequent stressful life events, limited social and economic resources, and other demographic disadvantages, produces greater risk for mental health problems.

Simmons et al. (2008) tested these two models of depression with rural, low-income women. Findings indicated that the social causation model was a better approximation of the relationship than the social selection model for their rural sample. Economic status as defined by poverty level, employment status, and self-rated economic sufficiency is indeed a social contributor to mental health status; however, the true relationship between economic status and depression likely reflects elements of both theories, indicating that there may be a circular feed between economic status and depression and between social causation and social selection. Chronic poverty and the associated physical and mental stressors may contribute to biologically based changes in the brain that produce depression. In turn, depression negatively affects behaviors necessary for productive work, thus contributing to limited employment and continued poverty (Simmons et al., 2008).

The relationship between mental health and urban environments has also been explored. Anakwenze and Zuberi (2013) suggested that mounting economic pressures, caused by unstable work and low income, created feelings of emotional distress. This distress then lowered parents' sense of efficacy regarding their beliefs about the influence

they had over their children and their environments. Crime was also a major component of poverty in the urban environment that helped facilitate a relationship between city living and mental illness.

Anakwenze and Zuberi (2013) also found that higher SES directly promotes a sense of efficacy, control, and biological health. At the community level, alienation, dependency, and exploitation caused by resource deprivation constrain social cohesion among neighbors and their willingness to intervene for the public good. Therefore, individuals who feel powerless are unlikely to intervene to reduce violence in their neighborhoods. Repeated exposure to violence can lead to persistent patterns of psychological withdrawal, depression, and social disengagement. The prevalence of violence within disadvantaged neighborhoods yields serious mental health problems, as chronic stress results in biological responses that undermine self-efficacy. The threat of violence, when combined with joblessness, substandard housing, and inadequate schooling, causes individuals to develop even stronger feelings of powerlessness (Anakwenze & Zuberi, 2013).

Anakwenze and Zuberi (2013) suggested that the relationship between poverty and mental health is bidirectional, with poverty often leading to mental illness and mental illness regularly reinforcing poverty. The criminal justice system illustrates this relationship. A high percentage of the mentally ill are arrested, and this continues poverty for those residing within this population. Incarceration reduces the potential for future employment which reinforces the relationship between poverty and mental illness in inner cities.

Additionally, maternal depression adversely affects children's health and behaviors (Dahlen, 2016). The negative effects of maternal depression on children begins in infancy and lasts through adolescence and beyond. Dahlen (2016) investigated the range of causal effects of maternal depression on elementary school-aged children. This study examined the effect of maternal depression on school-aged childhood outcomes using nationally representative longitudinal data to evaluate severity, chronicity, and longer-term time trends (Dahlen, 2016).

Results from each survey period of Dahlen's study indicated that maternal depression was associated with negative impacts on children and reductions in cognitive and non-cognitive performance in school. In both kindergarten and third grade, the presence of maternal depression was accompanied by lower math and reading test scores. Social-emotional outcomes were also negatively affected, and children of depressed mothers were less able to benefit from the learning environment, exhibited less self-control, demonstrated lower interpersonal skills, and were more likely to display internal and external problem behaviors. Further, as the severity of maternal depression increased, the magnitude of the associative relationship with negative outcomes in their children increased.

Poverty and Parental Stress

Research suggests that those living in poverty are more likely to experience undesirable outcomes in life (Anderson, 2018). Poverty is highly predictive of psychological maladjustment for parents and their children (Anderson, 2018). The family stress model (FSM) indicates that the stress associated with poverty leads to psychological distress, poor relationships between parents and their children, and

subsequent child problems. The FSM proposes that both social and economic situations create differences in developmental outcomes for children and their parents (Neppl et al., 2016).

The FSM suggests a series of mediated relationships between hardship conditions, economic pressure, the emotional state of caregivers, conflicts between caregivers, parenting practices, and child adjustment (Neppl et al., 2016). This model proposes that hardship conditions can affect the degree of economic pressure experienced by a family. Markers of hardship may include low income, negative financial events, high debts relative to assets, or whether a family meets governmental guidelines for defining poverty status. Conger et al. (2002) suggested that these objective economic conditions influence family functioning and child adjustment primarily through the economic pressures they generate. Hardship conditions influence individual well-being and family functioning through the strains or pressures they create in daily living.

Economic pressure reflects the painful realities created by hardship conditions, such as being unable to purchase necessary goods and services, having to make significant reductions in daily expenses, and being unable to pay monthly bills (Conger et al., 2002). The inability to purchase necessary goods translates into unmet basic and material needs, such as not having enough money to afford adequate housing, clothing, furniture, transportation, food, and medical care. Having to make significant reductions in daily expenses could be described as postponing medical or dental care, changing food shopping or eating habits to save money, or taking an extra job to help meet expenses (Conger et al., 2002). These pressures are the psychological manifestations and

responses to economic hardships and are thought to place parents at increased risk for emotional distress, such as depression, anxiety, and anger (Neppl et al., 2016).

Masarik and Conger (2017) stated that a caregiver's depressed mood can then lead to caregiver conflict and withdrawal. Parents preoccupied by their personal problems and marital distress are expected to demonstrate less affection and more hostility toward their partners. This emotional distress subsequently produces inclinations toward aggression and anger directed at their partners, such as criticism, defensiveness, and insensitivity, as well as withdrawal of supportive behaviors. Additionally, depressive symptoms predicted negative perceptions of the marriages as well as lower relationship satisfaction for both husbands and wives.

Caregiver depressed mood also decreases the level of parental nurturing both directly and indirectly toward their children, which subsequently diminishes parental warmth and involvement (Masarik & Conger, 2017). These disruptions in the relationships between parents also lead to harsh and inconsistent parenting, a key proximal influence on the social and emotional well-being of children (Neppl et al., 2016). A number of studies have shown that parental involvement, warmth, support, and low hostility have a positive impact on child adjustment either by promoting academic, personal, or social competence or by reducing risk for emotional or behavioral problems (Conger et al., 2002).

Poverty and Parental Attachments

Psychological distress associated with poverty understandably diminishes parents' capacity for the positive parenting behaviors that promote healthy development (Cooper, Crosnoe, Suizzo, & Pituch, 2010). There have been various perspectives suggested to

help explain why poverty impacts a child's development. The family stress perspective focuses on the effect of income through the parent's emotional well-being and parenting practices. Economic hardships can affect a parent's psychological well-being adversely; this psychological distress leads to less supportive parenting practices, which can have a negative impact on a child's development. Adults who are living in poverty are often single and working low-income jobs to support multiple family members, which can then lead to depression (Yeung et al., 2002).

Radke-Yarrow et al. (1985) investigated attachment patterns in families with depression and focused on the quality of the affective bond that forms between mother and child. Ratings of interactive behaviors, including contact maintaining and proximity seeking, avoidance, resistance, search, and distance interaction were recorded. In this study, children were classified as securely or insecurely attached, with subcategories for insecure attachment as insecure-ambivalent, insecure-avoidant, or insecurely attached manifesting both ambivalence and avoidance. Maternal depression may interfere with a mother's ability to relate to her child in ways that promote a secure attachment. Children of depressed mothers have been exposed to maternal sad affect, hopelessness, helplessness, irritability, and confusion, causing them to perceive their mothers as unresponsive and unavailable, which relates directly to negative attachment.

The economic pressures discussed in the FSM found that these pressures are associated with maternal depression and somatization, which are related significantly to decreases in sensitive and supportive parenting practices (Yeung et al., 2002). High quality mother-infant interactions include a variety of characteristics, which are often shaped by the mother (Broth, Goodman, Hall, & Raynor, 2004). The behaviors and

mental health impairments of a depressed parent have the potential to interfere with the functions and responsibilities of caregiving, resulting in impairments to positive affective relationships with the child. Impairments associated with depression include sad affect, hopelessness, irritability, confusion, and emotional unavailability. These impairments directly affect child-rearing practices and interactions with the child (Radke-Yarrow, Cummings, Kuczynski, & Chapman, 1985).

Research supports that high quality maternal-infant interactions, characterized as maternal behaviors contingent to the infant's needs and communicative attempts, is directly associated with an infant's attachment style (Tracy & Ainsworth, 1981). Mothers with high responsivity, warm and accepting attitudes toward their children, and emotional availability are associated directly with secure attachments (Blehar, Lieberman, & Ainsworth, 1977). Infants receive the most benefit when mothers are physically and emotionally available to them (Broth et al., 2004). Warm, noncoercive parenting behaviors can protect a child from the negative consequences of economic hardships. Parenting practices can influence a child's cognitive achievement as well as behavior problems in early years. More depressed parents may be less likely to engage actively in activities that promote children's investment, such as helping with homework, participating in a rich conversation, or engaging children in reading (Yeung et al., 2002).

Parental Availability and Educational Outcomes

Ross (2016) suggested that multiple distinct dimensions of parental involvement exist and have effects on students' academic growth in high school. The following are some of the many dimensions of parental involvement: (a) parental aspirations for their children's educational attainment, (b) parent participation in school functions, (c) family

rules reflecting parental home supervision, (d) parental advising, (e) parent participation in their children's extracurricular activities, (f) parent-school communication regarding children's problems at school, (g) school-initiated contact with parents regarding benign school issues, and (h) parent-initiated contact with schools regarding benign school issues. There is a powerful association between parents' educational aspirations for their children and student academic outcomes. Parent aspirations and school-initiated contact with parents showed strong positive effects on students' school engagement and their intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy toward mathematics and English (Ross, 2016).

Hoglund, Jones, Brown, and Aber (2015) found that parent involvement in schooling is a multidimensional construct that refers to the engagement of significant caregivers in the education of their children at home, such as helping their children with homework, and at school, such as communicating with their children's teachers and supporting their children in school. Parent involvement in schooling may be particularly important for low-income children, who are often vulnerable to poor academic and social emotional adjustment. Among low-income families, variability in the degree to which they experience economic hardship may impact the frequency by which low-income parents can participate in school-related activities and their children's levels of adjustment. In addition, parent involvement may mediate the effect of economic hardship on children's prospective adjustment (Hoglund et al., 2015).

There appears to be widespread agreement that parents have an important role in their children's educational development and that meaningful home-school collaboration helps to facilitate better educational outcomes (Raffaele & Knoff, 1999). This is true throughout children's schooling but may be particularly important during the preschool

and early elementary years when children are developing basic skills, forming ideas about themselves as learners, and adjusting to the school environment. Parental financial stress is associated with school-related characteristics and trajectories in youth, as poverty hinders school readiness. In addition to completing fewer years of schooling, impoverished youth have fewer academic skills upon school entry which are critical for later achievement (Raffaele & Knoff, 1999).

Parental involvement in education is an important factor in student achievement. When parents become involved in the education of their children, a dramatic increase in student grades, test scores, and overall academic outcomes is reported (Gould, 2011). Guiding students toward high school completion and college enrollment are major goals of the U.S. education system. Student risk factors that lead to the decision to drop out of school include living in a single-parent household, being economically disadvantaged, experiencing grade retention, limited English proficiency, emotional and/or behavioral disorders, and learning disabilities, to name a few (Ross, 2016). Conversely, studies have also found that, when asked, students cite a number of school, family, and work-related reasons for dropping out of school. There is strong agreement among federal policymakers that an important part of any strategy to reduce dropout rates (overall and particularly among vulnerable subgroups) is for school leaders to improve family-school relations and increase parental involvement in education (Ross, 2016).

Parental involvement has been shown to positively impact students' academic outcomes, behavior, motivation, engagement, and self-efficacy (Ross, 2016). Studies have shown the positive impact of parental involvement on a number of proximal and distal student outcomes, including reading and mathematics achievement, student

behavior in school, school attendance, preparation for class, course completion, student motivation, academic self-efficacy, engagement, and middle school dropout behavior. Students are best served when schools help families establish supportive home environments for learning, provide two-way systems of communication about school programs and student progress, actively recruit and organize help from parents, facilitate at-home learning, involve parents from all races and socioeconomic backgrounds as representatives and leaders on school committees, and identify and effectively integrate community resources to strengthen school programs (Ross, 2016).

Hoglund, Jones, Brown, and Aber (2015) discussed that parent involvement in school-related activities contributes to prospective child adjustment is broadly consistent with both social capital and socialization theory. Parent involvement in school is believed to be a resource that parents distribute to their children and that has the potential to directly improve children's adjustment. Socialization theory proposes that parents are the primary socializers of children's development and, like social capital theory, situates parents as key sources of educational support for their children. Such socialization about schooling is believed to be the process by which children come to develop and express specific school-related values, beliefs, and behaviors that are consistent with their family beliefs (Hoglund et al., 2015).

Drawing from the socialization and social capital theoretical perspectives, parents' school-related involvement in the home and school setting is expected to contribute positively to children's prospective adjustment because parents are thought to be generally motivated to engage in activities that have the potential to enhance their children's adjustment (Hoglund et al., 2015). Accordingly, parents are believed to

socialize children to value learning and to develop the self-regulation skills necessary to participate successfully in school. When parents are engaged in children's schooling at home, they also model a positive valuing of school that may motivate children to be more engaged in and excited about school, nurturing children's academic success.

Involvement in the school setting includes activities such as communicating with teachers about children's school-related adjustment and actively supporting children's adjustment in the school setting (Hoglund et al., 2015).

Parental involvement has been conceptualized as six types of activities that are essential to a comprehensive program of a family, school, and community partnership: (a) parenting, (b) communicating, (c) volunteering, (d) learning at home, (e) decision making, and (f) collaborating with the community (Ross, 2016). These activities are thought to be influential because when parents are positively involved in the school setting, they can proactively monitor children's school-related adjustment, demonstrate their connection to the school system, and provide a source of support for their children at school. Parent involvement in the school setting, including home-school conferencing and educational support, has been found to contribute positively to children's prospective academic and social-emotional adjustment (Hoglund et al., 2015). Indeed, Hoglund, Jones, Brown, and Aber (2015) found that when low-income, ethnically diverse parents increased their involvement in the school setting from kindergarten to fifth grade, their children showed corresponding gains in literacy skills.

Living in the context of economic hardship has a strong possibility to undermine children's academic and social-emotional adjustment, often through the adverse effects of hardship on parenting behaviors such as their involvement in schooling. Nonetheless,

variability exists in the degree to which low-income parents have the resources and ability to be engaged in their children's schooling and the degree to which their children demonstrate competent or problematic adjustment. Social capital theory argues that the social resources parents provide to their children, such as their involvement in school-related activities, mediates the effect of economic hardship on children's academic and social-emotional adjustment (Hoglund et al., 2015).

Unfortunately, relationships with parents experiencing social or economic disadvantages often are perceived as the most difficult to develop, particularly when children are already experiencing school-related difficulties (Raffaele & Knoff, 1999). Although most educators recognize the importance of involving parents in the problem-solving process when a child is struggling, many experience frustration in attempting to involve parents who are disconnected from the educational system at this stage when previous relationships have not been established. In these circumstances, parents may fail to respond to attempts to contact them, miss school meetings, not follow through with recommendations from school personnel to obtain outside assistance for their children, and/or respond with hostility to the suggestion that their children are having problems. When this occurs, the assumption is often made that children's parents are unwilling or unable to work with school personnel to identify positive solutions (Raffaele & Knoff, 1999). Educators frequently stop trying to involve parents and focus on interventions limited to the school environment, recognizing that this is less than ideal. It must be noted, however, that although family status variables may be predictive of parent involvement, there is widespread agreement that family process variables (i.e., what

families actually do) are more important than status variables in predicting student achievement (Raffaele & Knoff, 1999).

Educational attainment plays a key role in determining social and economic well-being in adulthood (De Civita et al., 2004), but a shocking number of students leave school each year without successfully completing high school programs. One important determinant of high school dropout is the experience of grade retention during elementary school. Longitudinal studies using different developmental data sets have shown that children exposed to persistent poverty during middle childhood and early adolescence are at greater risk of being behind in grade for age (De Civita et al., 2004). In addition, some poor families may rely exclusively on earned income as opposed to relying solely on welfare, and others may combine work and welfare as an alternative strategy. Parental income source may reflect underlying family values and processes transmitted to children. For example, parental attachment in the labor force conveys implicit and explicit messages about the importance of responsibility, commitment, and pride in contributing to society. Parental work is believed to provide discipline and structure to daily living, which encourages the development of healthy behaviors. As such, parents are better positioned to communicate to their children the connection between their current education and future employment opportunities. Part of this communication might focus on the importance of doing well in school (De Civita et al., 2004).

In contrast, De Civita et al. (2004) found that families who rely exclusively on welfare are, by definition, not in contact with the labor market, its contributors, and its culture; this leads to families adopting values, norms, and behaviors that tend to perpetuate a cycle of poverty and social dependence. Its behavioral effects may be

evidenced by a lack of motivation and interest in children's educational attainment. In a review of the literature, De Civita and colleagues found that welfare traps both parents and children in poverty because it offers a strong economic alternative to work; therefore, over time, welfare income is viewed as a safety net and as a way of life that might lead to an intergenerational tradition. Children learn firsthand that welfare is available and that they do not have to work as hard in school to secure their economic futures (De Civita et al., 2004).

On the other hand, De Civita et al. (2004), suggested that working-poor parents raise their children under economically vulnerable circumstances. Their research has shown that parents and children are affected negatively by economic pressure. In addition, working-poor parents are often confined to low-complexity, low-wage jobs that offer little opportunity for advancement; therefore, by observing parents work hard at less desirable jobs and remaining poor, children may come to believe that their own prospects of getting a well-paying high-status job are not good. Furthermore, the researchers suggested that if children's work aspirations diminish, doing well in school might be seen as less important for future economic success. Income source within the context of persistent poverty may affect children's academic development by dampening parents' educational aspirations for their children. Parents living with financial stress tend to be more pessimistic about their lives and the economic future of their children, tend to feel less confident that they will have the material resources to support their children through school, and experience greater difficulties in helping their children with homework as they advance in grade. Therefore, parents may adapt their aspirations for their children's educational future in terms of what is realistically possible given their limited resources,

making lower educational degrees desirable and acceptable (De Civita et al., 2004).

Single-parent families report lower educational expectations for their children, provide less monitoring of schoolwork, and less overall supervision of social activities (Astone & McLanahan, 1991). Therefore, students who grow up in single-parent families are less likely to complete high school or to attend college than students who grow up with both parents due to the economic positions of their families (Gould, 2011). Students whose parents had low educational expectations for them (e.g., only expecting high school graduation) were more than five times as likely as other students to drop out of school in the eighth grade (Ross, 2016). Additionally, students who often discussed school courses with their parents had 44% higher odds of immediate enrollment in postsecondary education, compared to those who never had these discussions with their parents (Ross, 2016).

School failure has been proposed as a process that occurs over time and leads to disengagement; when this disengagement reaches a certain level, a student will leave school (Astone & McLanahan, 1991). Disengagement has both affective and behavioral dimensions. Low educational aspirations are an affective indicator of disengagement from school, and high aspirations are critical in predicting educational achievement (Astone & McLanahan, 1991). School attendance is a behavioral indicator of disengagement from school. Educational attainment involves many decisions on various dimensions, such as curriculum placement, participation in extracurricular activities, and postsecondary school choice. Ineffective or inadequate parental assistance may lead students to feel overwhelmed and cause them to drop out. Success in school is related to

deliberate efforts by parents to instill discipline and good study habits into their children (Astone & McLanahan, 1991).

To improve students' chances of success, Ross (2016) suggested that parents supplement their high expectations with actively assisting their children in planning for college. To the extent that parents are not familiar with the college planning process, schools should be working to provide this information and other skills to enhance the "college knowledge" of both parents and students. Other recommendations include augmenting the instruction and extracurricular activities that youth receive at school by enrolling them in afterschool tutorials, study groups, community sports programs, and other activities. Importantly, given that high SES parents will likely have better access to these kinds of services than low SES parents, federal and locally-funded programs may be needed to offset costs, as well as provide transportation and other resources for high-needs children. This is another area in which schools have a duty to coach and train parents about effectively engaging in their children's education (Ross, 2016).

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

Overview

Archival data were analyzed from a private residential school on students who were accepted and subsequently enrolled in the school between the years of 2003 and 2018 to examine the relationship between the parent availability score (PAS) and high school graduation. The private residential school uses an applicant database to obtain all data prior to admission into the school, including the PAS. A separate student database is used to store all demographic information of each student after enrollment into the school, including date of graduation. Queries were run through these two programs to establish the students' dates of enrollment, years of graduation, and PAS. Matched data were de-identified for use by the researcher. In addition, the following demographic information was gathered for these students: gender, grade at time of enrollment, year of enrollment, and type of poverty (i.e., rural, suburban, or urban).

Description of Setting

A private residential school in the northeastern United States, which provides a cost-free, coeducation to qualifying pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade students, was utilized in this study. At this school, students live in homes based on grade and gender, and attend school on campus. Most homes have between eight and 12 students residing in them. All homes have residential care workers who also live in the homes and are employed full-time by the school. These residential care workers serve as mentors and provide support, guidance, and academic assistance to the students. If a student enrolls in elementary school and remains at the school through graduation, at a minimum he or she will live in four different homes. Students transition homes from elementary to middle

division, from middle to senior division, and from senior division into independent housing for their twelfth grade year.

Participants

For the purposes of this study, students from the private residential school who had been accepted and enrolled between the years of 2003 and 2018 and either were or would have been graduates of the 2017 or 2018 classes were included, totaling 738 students. All 738 students were used as participants in this study based on a review of admissions reports and PAS scores for the participants. Based on 2016 school demographic statistics, 49% of students were male and 51% of students were female. Forty-four percent of the students were White, 33% were Black, 8% were Hispanic, 1% was Asian, and 14% were considered other races. Finally, 20% of the students were enrolled in the elementary division (grades PK-4; $n = 220$), 34% were enrolled in the middle division (grades 5-8; $n = 326$), and 46% were enrolled in the senior division (grades 9-12; $n = 192$).

Demographic and descriptive information of participants. A total of 365 students were or would have been graduates of the 2017 graduating class and 373 students were or would have been graduates of the 2018 graduating class. Of these 738 students, 374 students were males and 364 students were females. Within the 2017 graduating class, 174 students were males and 191 students were females; within the 2018 graduating class, 200 students were males and 173 were females. Table 1 illustrates demographic data at time of enrollment.

Table 1

Grade at Time of Enrollment

Division	Frequency
Elementary	
PK	15
K	20
1	34
2	29
3	61
4	61
Middle	
5	55
6	76
7	84
8	111
Senior	
9	151
10	38
11	3
12	0
Total	738

Students who had been accepted and enrolled between the years of 2003 and 2018 were included, as they were or would have been graduates of the 2017 or 2018 graduating classes. Table 2 depicts frequency by year of enrollment.

Table 2

Year of Enrollment

Year of Enrollment	Frequency
03-04 SY	9
04-05 SY	15
05-06 SY	25
06-07 SY	37
07-08 SY	45
08-09 SY	58
09-10 SY	62
10-11 SY	63
11-12 SY	76
12-13 SY	111
13-14 SY	112
14-15 SY	104
15-16 SY	19
16-17 SY	2
17-18 SY	0
Total	738

Type of poverty was broken into the following groups: rural, suburban, and urban. Zip codes for all of the participants of this study were obtained through the applicant database, and the researcher then matched them to their type of poverty through a tool used by the private residential school. This tool lists all zip codes in the U.S. (41,067), along with the state, city, county, and type of poverty associated with each zip code. Poverty frequencies are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Type of Poverty

Type of Poverty	Percentage	Frequency
Rural	35%	257
Suburban	32%	237
Urban	33%	244
Total	100%	738

Eligibility for School Enrollment

To apply to this school, students must come from income-eligible families, have the ability to learn, be free of serious behavioral problems that are likely to disrupt life in the classroom or student home life the school, and be able to participate in and benefit from the school's programming. To be considered income-eligible, each applicant's total household income should be at or near poverty. Even if an applicant meets the minimum qualifications, admission is not guaranteed. One of the most important factors is need, which is measured by a scale for parental availability.

Additional information is requested from the student's current school regarding his or her behavior, social skills, peer relations, personal strengths, attendance, academic supports, discipline referrals, and state achievement scores. After this information is received and reviewed by admission staff, the student enters the pre-interview phase and is deemed eligible for an interview on campus. Interviews are scheduled based on admissions criteria, current grade openings, and current bed openings. Roughly 300 students are accepted for admission each year.

Once an interview has been scheduled, the student and his or her family are invited to campus for an all-day interview. All students are administered a cognitive assessment, a clinical interview, and multiple behavior rating scales. Additional math and reading achievement measures may be administered based on school information or the student's performance on the day of the interview. An admissions report is compiled following the interview and, if minimum admissions criteria continue to be met, the student is considered a candidate for enrollment.

Measures

In addition to the admissions report, a PAS, which is measured by a scale, is assigned to each applicant who interviews. The PAS was developed by the school's admissions staff and was based upon research from poverty literature (see Appendix for complete PAS measure). Scores are as follows: both biological/adoptive parents available (PAS 1); one biological/adoptive parent available (PAS 2); both biological/adoptive parents are unavailable, but the student still lives with one or both biological/adoptive parents (PAS 3); and student lives with someone other than biological/adoptive parent (PAS 4). A parent is considered available if the child lives

with the parent and the parent has the capacity to care for the child, or if the parent has regular visitation and/or contact (e.g., monthly visits or weekly phone calls) with the child even if he or she does not live with the parent. Parents do not need to be married or living together for both to be considered available.

For a parent to be considered unavailable, any or all of the following areas could be present: limited physical capacity to effectively parent the child, limited mental capacity to effectively parent the child, active abuse of drugs or alcohol or ongoing substance abuse history, inadequate supervision; chronic neglect; incarceration, death, no contact or sporadic contact (e.g., not on a regular basis or periods of regular contact with months of no contact), or unknown whereabouts.

In order to be considered of limited physical capacity by this school, the parent must meet one of the three following criteria: diagnosis of a physical illness that seriously restricts or interferes the parent's ability to care for the child (e.g., not being able to hold a job, not providing food for the child, or the child being required to physically care for the parent), an acute or chronic illness that critically impairs the parent's ability to perform a child caring role or a debilitating disease that has progressed to the stage of sustained impairment, or a terminal illness that will impair the parent's ability to care for the child.

Limited mental capacity is defined as one of the following six conditions: diagnosis of a mental illness that may be affected by delusions or hallucinations, diagnosis of a mental illness that leads to incoherent or unresponsive impairment in communication, diagnosis of a mental illness that leads to severe impairment in judgment or very poor reasoning abilities, a parent is dangerous to self or others due to diagnosis of

a mental illness, a parent has severe intellectual limitations, or a parent has emotional instability or serious lack of self-control that adversely affects the ability to care for the child due to a diagnosis of a mental illness.

Active abuse of drugs or alcohol or an ongoing substance abuse history is defined as the regular and heavy use of a substance; a compulsion to use a substance, loss of control over use, and the continued use of the substance despite adverse consequences; not meeting social responsibilities (e.g., loss of job, demise of marriage, or financial problems); or driving under the influence with a child in the car or leaving a young child unattended in a car while under the influence.

Inadequate supervision refers to the parent not attending to the child to the extent that need for adequate care goes unnoticed or unmet (e.g., playing with dangerous objects, wandering outdoors), leaving the child alone unsupervised, repeated demonstration of inadequate or inappropriate babysitting or child care arrangements, or unwillingness to maintain custody as evidenced by repeated shuttling of the child from one household to another or repeatedly leaving the child with others for days or weeks at a time.

Finally, chronic neglect is the ongoing pattern of a parent failing to provide a child's basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, and/or medical care. As defined by the school, this can include the following: a child starving of food or drink for prolonged periods, no food or drink available to the child, the child being without warm clothing in cold months, no housing or emergency shelter (e.g., the child is sleeping in the street, a tent, or a car), long term involvement of Children and Youth Services (over 1 year), or

the parent does not seek treatment for the child's immediate and dangerous medical conditions and/or does not follow prescribed treatment regimens for medical conditions.

Procedure

A query was run through the student database to determine students who were graduates of the 2017 and 2018 classes of the private residential school. This information was provided to the researcher by an administrator, as the researcher did not readily have access to this information. To identify the students who did not graduate with their peers in the 2017 and 2018 classes, a query was run through the applicant database system to discover students who were enrolled in the school during this time frame (e.g., kindergarten between 2005-2006, first grade between 2006-2007, second grade between 2007-2008, and so on). These students were then matched with their PASs, which were also obtained from the applicant database system.

Approximately 391 admissions reports were spot-checked to ensure that the PAS score entered into the applicant database system matched the information provided in the report at time of admission. In order to spot-check these reports, the researcher accessed the applicant database and electronically retrieved the admissions report for each of these 391 students. The researcher then read through the report and obtained the PAS score. Additionally, one student's admissions report was not available electronically; therefore, the researcher located the paper file in the filing room and obtained the PAS score by reading through the paper copy of the admissions report.

In addition, the following demographic information was gathered for these students: gender, grade at time of enrollment, year of enrollment, and type of poverty (i.e., rural, suburban, or urban). All of this demographic information was available in the

applicant database system, with the exception of type of poverty, which was gleaned from their zip codes.

After the list of students who graduated or would have graduated in 2017 or 2018 was generated, case identification numbers were developed in coordination with the researcher on site of the private residential school to guarantee the student researcher was blind to the student sample used for this research study. Once all case identification numbers were created, an Excel spreadsheet was developed with case identification numbers, gender, grade at time of enrollment, year of enrollment, zip code, type of poverty, PAS, and an indication of whether the student graduated on time.

Once this list was compiled, the researcher ran the following frequencies using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 24: gender, PAS, graduation year (2017 or 2018), year of enrollment, grade at enrollment (PK-12), division (elementary, middle, or senior), type of poverty (rural, suburban, urban), and an indication of whether the student graduated (yes, no). Additionally, specific statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS to test the various hypotheses proposed in this study.

CHAPTER 4: Results

Of the 738 students who enrolled at the private residential school between 2003 and 2018 and were or would have been graduates of the 2017 or 2018 graduating classes, 439 (59%) students graduated on time and 299 (41%) students did not graduate. Of the 365 students who were or would have been graduates of the 2017 graduating class, 211 (58%) students graduated on time and 154 (42%) students did not graduate. Finally, of the 373 students who were or would have been graduates of the 2018 graduating class, 228 (61%) students graduated on time and 145 (39%) students did not graduate.

Pearson's Chi-Square Test

Hypotheses were analyzed using Pearson's chi-square test given that both the predictor and outcome variables were categorical in nature. Using this type of analysis compares the frequencies observed in certain categories to the frequencies expected those categories by chance (Field, 2013). Relationships between parental availability and high school graduation rates, grade at time of enrollment and on-time high school graduation rates, and type of poverty and on-time high school graduation rates were all explored.

Parent Availability

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of parental availability on students from low-income families and on-time high school graduation rates from a private residential school. Specific hypotheses are described in detail below; however, an analysis of the sample showed that there was not a significant association between parental availability and on-time high school graduation rates, $\chi^2(3) = 7.17, p < .067$. Table 4 depicts data on parent availability and graduation.

Hypothesis 1. The first hypothesis stated that students from low-income families who had both of their biological/adoptive parents available at time of admission would be more likely to graduate on time from high school than students from low-income families who had one biological/adoptive parent available at time of admission. Of the 738 students who enrolled at the private residential school between 2003 and 2018 and were or would have been graduates of the 2017 or 2018 graduating classes, 169 (23%) of the students had both of their parents available at time of admission. Of these 169 students, 112 (66%) graduated on time and 57 (34%) did not graduate. There were 422 (57%) students who enrolled with one biological/adoptive parent available at time of admission. Of these 422 students, 250 (59%) graduated on time and 172 (41%) did not graduate.

Hypothesis 2. The second hypothesis stated that students from low-income families who had both of their biological/adoptive parents available at time of admission would be more likely to graduate on time from high school than students from low-income families who lived with one or both biological/adoptive parents, but they were unavailable. Of the 738 students who enrolled at the private residential school between 2003 and 2018 and were or would have been graduates of the 2017 or 2018 graduating classes, 169 (23%) of the students enrolled with both of their parents available at time of admission. Of these 169 students, 112 (66%) graduated on time and 57 (34%) did not graduate. There were 31(4%) students who lived with one or both biological/adoptive parent, but the parents were considered unavailable at time of admission. Of these 31 students, 14 (45%) graduated on time and 17 (55%) did not graduate.

Hypothesis 3. The third hypothesis stated that students from low-income families who had both of their biological/adoptive parents available at time of admission would be

likely to graduate on time than students from low-income families who lived with someone other than a biological/adoptive parent at time of admission. Of the 738 students who enrolled at the private residential school between 2003 and 2018 and were or would have been graduates of the 2017 or 2018 graduating classes, 169 (23%) of the students enrolled with both of their parents available at time of admission. Of these 169 students, 112 (66%) graduated on time and 57 (34%) did not graduate. There were 116 (16%) students who lived with people other than biological/adoptive parents at time of enrollment. Of these 116 students, 63 (54%) graduated on time and 53 (46%) did not graduate.

Hypothesis 4. A fourth hypothesis was that students from low-income families who lived with someone other than a biological/adoptive parent at time of admission would be more likely to graduate on time than students from low-income families who lived with one or both biological/adoptive parents, but they were unavailable. Of the 738 students who enrolled at the private residential school between 2003 and 2018 and were or would have been graduates of the 2017 or 2018 graduating classes, 116 (16%) lived with people other than biological/adoptive parents at time of enrollment. Of these 116 students, 63 (54%) graduated on time and 53 (46%) did not graduate. There were 31(4%) students who lived with one or both biological/adoptive parents, but the parents were considered unavailable at time of admission. Of these 31 students, 14 (45%) graduated on time and 17 (55%) did not graduate.

Hypothesis 5. Finally, the fifth hypothesis stated that students from low-income families who had one adoptive/biological parent available at time of admission would be more likely to graduate on time than students from low-income families who lived with

one or both biological/adoptive parents, but they were unavailable. Of the 738 students who enrolled at the private residential school between 2003 and 2018 and were or would have been graduates of the 2017 or 2018 graduating classes, 422 (57%) of the students enrolled with one biological/adoptive parent available at time of admission. Of these 422 students, 250 (59%) graduated on time and 172 (41%) did not graduate. There were 31(4%) students who lived with one or both biological/adoptive parents, but the parents were considered unavailable at time of admission. Of these 31 students, 14 (45%) graduated on time and 17 (55%) did not graduate.

Table 4

Parental Availability and On-Time Graduation

Parental Availability	Graduated	Did not Graduate	Total
PAS 1	112 (66%)	57 (34%)	169
PAS 2	250 (59%)	172 (41%)	422
PAS 3	14 (45%)	17 (55%)	31
PAS 4	63 (54%)	53 (46%)	116
Total	439 (59%)	299 (41%)	738

Demographic Variables

Additional predictor variables were explored to determine their impact on on-time high school graduation rates for students from low-income families. These variables

included grade at time of enrollment and type of poverty. These variables were exploratory in nature; therefore, no hypotheses were proposed.

An analysis of the sample showed that there was a significant association between grade at time of enrollment and on-time high school graduation rates, $\chi^2(2) = 43.37, p < .000$. Of the 738 students who enrolled between 2003 and 2018 and were or would have been graduates of the 2017 or 2018 graduating classes, 220 (30%) enrolled into the elementary division, 326 (44%) enrolled into the middle division, and 192 (26%) enrolled into the senior division. Students who enrolled into the senior division had a 74% on-time graduation rate, students who enrolled into the middle division had a 62% on-time graduation rate, and students who enrolled into the elementary division had a 43% on-time graduation rate. Table 5 illustrates graduation rate by division.

Table 5

Grade at Time of Enrollment and On-Time Graduation

Division	Graduated	Did not Graduate	Total
Elementary (PK-4)	94 (43%)	126 (57%)	220
Middle (5-8)	203 (62%)	123 (38%)	326
Senior (9-12)	142 (74%)	50 (26%)	192
Total	439 (59%)	299 (41%)	738

A final analysis of the sample showed that there was a significant association between type of poverty and on-time high school graduation rates, $\chi^2 (2) = 11.60, p < .003$. Of the 738 students who enrolled 2003 and 2018 and were or would have been graduates of the 2017 or 2018 graduating classes, 237 (32%) came from suburban poverty, 244 (33%) came from urban poverty, and 257 (35%) came from rural poverty. Students who came from urban poverty had a 68% on-time graduation rate, students who came from suburban poverty had a 57% on-time graduation rate, and students who came from rural poverty had a 54% on-time graduation rate. Table 6 illustrates graduation rates by type of poverty.

Table 6

Type of Poverty and On-Time Graduation

Type of Poverty	Graduated	Did not Graduate	Total
Suburban	135 (57%)	102 (43%)	237
Urban	166 (68%)	78 (32%)	244
Rural	138 (54%)	119 (46%)	257
Total	439 (59%)	299 (41%)	738

CHAPTER 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of parental availability on students from low-income families and their on-time high school graduation rates.

Parental involvement in education is an important factor in student achievement. When parents become involved in the education of their children, a dramatic increase in student grades, test scores, and overall academic outcomes has been reported (Gould, 2011).

Lack of parental availability in children's lives and, subsequently, less involvement in their education leads to decreased rates of graduation for students from low-income families. This lack of parental availability and involvement relates to the increased number of stressors that parents face as a result of living in poverty. As stated, these stressors include limited physical and mental capacity to effectively parent the child, active abuse of drugs or alcohol or ongoing substance abuse history, inadequate supervision, chronic neglect, and/or incarceration. Information from this study will be used to refine the admissions process at the private residential school when engaging with students' families at time of admission and throughout their enrollment.

The results of this study indicate that there was not a significant association between parental availability and on-time high school graduation rates of students from low-income families attending a private residential school. These results are inconsistent with previous research surrounding parental involvement and educational success. Previous research states that parents have an important role in their children's educational development and that meaningful home-school collaboration helps to facilitate better educational outcomes (Raffaele & Knoff, 1999).

Although this study did not support previous research, there are various factors that could have impacted the results of this study. All students within this study attended a private residential school, and they lived away from their biological or adoptive families; therefore, parental involvement looked different for these students when compared to students who do not live away from their biological or adoptive families. As stated, Ross (2016) conceptualized parental involvement as six types of activities that are essential to a comprehensive program of a family, school, and community partnership: (a) parenting, (b) communicating, (c) volunteering, (d) learning at home, (e) decision making, and (e) collaborating with the community. Once students enroll at the private residential school, most activities of parental involvement are taken on by the residential care workers living in the home with the students. Therefore, parental involvement from biological or adoptive families may not be as significant to these students.

Additionally, it should be noted that the graduation rates for the 2017 and 2018 graduation classes (59%) are lower than the 2014 to 2015 national average graduation rates of private schools (99%; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Fisher et al. (1984) argued that when a child attends a residential school, the child has less direct sources of support from his or her family. The child is responsible for a larger number of daily decisions and his or her school day is extended through bedtime due to routines and disciplines enforced at a residential school. Consequently, a child who attends a residential school needs to cope with going to a new school, learning self-reliance, and developing independence. Additionally, they explained that interactions between biological or adoptive parents are more individualized and frequent when compared to interactions with residential school employees. Residential school employees are also

more likely to make demands and influence a child's behavior. Still other variables that could have impacted the results of this study, as well as the overall graduation rates from this school, include the idea that students enrolled at the private residential school may experience a sense of loss due to being separated from their families, may suffer from homesickness, or may be worried about their families while they are away from home (Fisher, Frazer, & Murray, 1984). Unfortunately, this study did not explore the reasons as to why a student did not graduate.

Results of this study found that there were significant associations between grade at time of enrollment and on-time high school graduation rates, as well as between type of poverty and on-time high school graduation rates. Students were more likely to graduate on time if they enrolled in the middle (fifth through eighth grades) or the senior (ninth through twelfth grades) divisions than students who enrolled in the elementary division (pre-kindergarten through fourth grade). Furthermore, students were more likely to graduate on time if they came from urban poverty rather than suburban or rural poverty.

Findings from the current study were consistent with a study completed by Bussert-Webb and Zhang (2016), who examined relationships between reading attitudes of students in grades nine through 12, their grade level, SES, and whether they attended school in an urban or rural environment. Results indicated that reading attitudes improved slightly each year after ninth grade. It was also found that students from urban schools had more positive attitudes toward reading than students from rural schools. Finally, this study showed that students who came from a lower SES had significantly

higher reading attitudes than students who came from a higher SES. (Bussert-Webb & Zhang, 2016).

For the purposes of this study, it could be suggested that students coming from urban poverty live in lower SES environments than those students who come from rural poverty and, subsequently, are more motivated to succeed academically and want to reject the label of struggling learner. It could also be that students coming from urban poverty have a higher desire to please their families than those coming from rural poverty due to their ethnicity. Students enrolled at the school noted that the music, dress-style, and choice of language reflect that of an urban culture. Therefore, another interpretation could be that the private residential school has more of an “urban” feel, which would help to support why students coming from urban poverty are more successful with on-time graduation rates than students coming from suburban or rural poverty.

Furthermore, it could be proposed that students who enrolled in the middle or senior divisions were more likely to graduate due to their maturity levels. It is possible that older students were better able to understand the long-term benefits of attending the private residential school and the sacrifices that their biological or adoptive parents were willing to make in order to send them to the private residential school. Additional data sources would need to be examined to determine whether these assumptions are correct.

Implications

Although the results of this study did not show an association between parental availability and on-time high school graduation rates of students from low-income at a private residential school, there were exploratory associations that were found to be significant for high school graduation rates. These exploratory associations indicated that

grade at time of enrollment and types of poverty were significant in predicting on-time high school graduation rates. Both of these exploratory associations will be useful to the admissions process at the private residential school when engaging with the students' families at time of admission and helping to determine which type of student may be successful at the private residential school prior to enrollment. For example, if the school would have to choose between similarly matched students, but one was living in rural poverty and the other was living in urban poverty, the private residential school may want to choose the student living in urban poverty, as they would be more likely to graduate on time. Additionally, these results could assist with identifying students who may be considered at-risk for not graduating on time. The school could provide targeted services to these students to help improve on-time graduation rates.

The private residential school should also explore why elementary school aged-children are less likely to graduate on time than middle or senior school-aged children. As Bussert-Webb and Zhang (2016) suggested, it could be that elementary school-aged children are less mature than their middle or senior school-aged peers; therefore, they may be less able to see the long-term gains of attending a private residential school. It could also be argued that elementary school-aged children are less capable of living away from their biological or adoptive families and/or understanding why they are no longer living with their biological or adoptive families. Conversely, it may be more difficult for parents to send their younger elementary school-aged children to a residential school than their older middle or senior school-aged children. Given these results, the private residential school may also want to consider focusing more effort engaging the families

of elementary school-aged children than with the families of middle and senior school-aged children, initially.

Additionally, given the results of this study, the private residential school may want to focus less attention on the parental availability of the biological or adoptive parents as this did not appear to impact on-time high school graduation rates. Students coming from families in which neither of their biological or adoptive parents were available were just as likely to graduate as students with both biological or adoptive parents available at time of enrollment. It is also important to point out that while attending the private residential school, a student's family circumstances could change for the better. For example, if at the time of enrollment both of the student's parents were incarcerated, this would have rendered them unavailable; however, these same parents could later be released from prison and want to withdraw their child from the private residential school, as their circumstances now allow them to care and provide for their child. One final thought regarding the results of parental availability and on-time high school graduation rates is that through the private residential school's programming, school and the student have been able to overcome the negative effects that are often associated with lack of parental availability. This conclusion would further support focusing less attention on the parental availability of the biological or adoptive parents at time of enrollment.

Limitations

Although this research has been helpful in exploring some of the variables that impact high school graduation rates from a private residential school, there are several limitations of this study. A major limitation was the number of variables that could have

also impacted whether a student graduated on time. This study only focused on parental availability at time of enrollment; however, there are many other reasons a student may not have graduated. Additional factors that could have influenced graduation rates include family circumstances, grades, behavioral concerns, and emotional concerns, to name a few. This study did not examine why a student did not graduate; it only looked at whether each child graduated on time.

Another limitation of this study was that it did not account for whether a student was retained once he or she enrolled. Year of expected on-time graduation was based on when a student should have graduated given his or her grade and date of enrollment. It is possible that some of students remained enrolled at the school and graduated earlier or later than expected. These students would have been overlooked in this study and would not have been counted as a successful graduate of the school. It is also possible that a student was retained at entrance, but graduated on time for the grade and date of enrollment.

An additional limitation of this study was its design. This was an archival research study in which data were examined, organized, and interpreted. Given the convenience of this data, additional data did not need to be gathered. Although archival data can provide information that is more extensive than one may be able to collect through traditional experiments, it often means that the data were collected by nonscientists. Finally, archival data are often correlational in nature and, therefore, direct cause and effect relationships are unable to be made.

Another limitation of this study is the statistical analysis that was utilized. Chi-square analyses were used, which are based on estimations. Additionally, multiple chi-

square analyses were run on the same data, which increased the number of estimations being made with the data. As a result of these estimations, there was a higher chance of a type 1 error. It is possible that significant associations found within the data were, in fact, false positives.

Finally, the sample of participants in this study makes it difficult to generalize the findings. Although there were a sufficient number of participants in this study, the participants were in a unique situation, as they attended a private residential school. As was discussed above, parental involvement looks much different for a student attending a residential school when compared to a student attending a non-residential school. Therefore, the circumstances of these participants may not be reflective of the general population. It would be beneficial to replicate this study at other private residential schools to determine whether these results are representative of other similar populations of students.

Future Directions

There are several areas that would be beneficial for future research regarding parental availability and high school graduation rates. Once a child enrolls at the private residential school, parent involvement looks much different than it does when the child is not attending a residential school. It would be interesting to define what parental involvement looks like for a child enrolled at a private residential school. In order to do this, future studies could focus on the characteristics and actions of parents whose children graduate successfully from private residential schools.

To this researcher's knowledge, parental availability is only measured at time of enrollment; it may be beneficial to measure parental availability at different points while

a child is enrolled at the private residential school. By measuring parental availability throughout a child's enrollment, it could provide additional information as to whether parental availability impacts high school graduation rates. In addition, reasons children withdrew from this school were not explored in this study. Was it because they were homesick? Was it because family circumstances changed? Was it because of emotional or behavioral concerns? Was it because parents changed their minds and no longer wanted their children to attend a residential school?

Finally, given that there were significant associations found between grade at time of enrollment, type of poverty, and on-time high school graduation rates, it would be important to explore these associations further. Future studies may want to focus on the characteristics of students living in rural poverty versus urban poverty. What are the differences between these types of poverty, and why are students living in urban poverty more likely to graduate than students living in rural poverty? Furthermore, consideration should also be given to why middle and senior school-aged students are more likely to graduate than elementary school-aged students. What is it that makes older students more successful, in terms of on-time graduation rates, than younger students? Answers to these questions will help the private residential school to better serve their population and contribute to the literature related to parental availability and academic success.

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Appendix**PARENT AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT***Abridged with permission 11/7/18*

Applicant: _____

Completed by: _____

Date completed: _____

PARENT AVAILABILITY SCORE

Instructions: Using the definitions on the following pages, determine the availability of the child's mother and father. Indicate your decision below. For the purposes of this evaluation, adoptive parents are the same as biological parents.

- _____ 1. Both parents available.
- _____ 2. One biological/adoptive parent available.
- _____ 3. Biological/adoptive parents unavailable; lives with biological parent(s).
- _____ 4. Lives with someone other than biological parent, including Agency custody.

Parent Availability Score: _____

MOTHER'S AVAILABILITY**MOTHER IS AVAILABLE IF:**

- _____ The child lives with mother and mother has the capacity to care for the child
- _____ The child does not live with mother but has regular visitation and/or contact, e.g., at least weekly telephone calls or monthly visits

MOTHER IS NOT AVAILABLE IF:

- _____ The child does not live with mother and has no contact or sporadic contact, e.g., not on a regular basis or regular contact with months of no contact
- _____ Deceased
- _____ Incarcerated
- _____ Whereabouts unknown
- _____ Lacks the capacity to care for the child, as described below:
 - _____ Limited physical capacity to effectively parent the child
 - _____ Limited mental capacity to effectively parent the child
 - _____ Actively abusing alcohol or drugs, or ongoing substance abuse history
 - _____ Inadequate supervision
 - _____ Chronic neglect

FATHER'S AVAILABILITY**FATHER IS AVAILABLE IF:**

- _____ The child lives with father and father has the capacity to care for the child
- _____ The child does not live with father but has regular visitation and/or contact, e.g., at least weekly telephone calls or monthly visits

FATHER IS NOT AVAILABLE IF:

- _____ The child does not live with the father and has no contact or sporadic contact, e.g., not on a regular basis or regular contact with months of no contact
- _____ Deceased
- _____ Incarcerated
- _____ Whereabouts unknown
- _____ Identity unknown
- _____ Lacks the capacity to care for the child, as described below:
 - _____ Limited physical capacity to effectively parent the child
 - _____ Limited mental capacity to effectively parent the child
 - _____ Actively abusing alcohol or drugs, or ongoing substance abuse history
 - _____ Inadequate supervision
 - _____ Chronic neglect